NATION
JAN 1972
STATINTL

EDITORIALS

The Worrying Point

The critical issue raised by publication of the Jack Anderson papers has to do not with leaks, or secrecy, or relations between President and press, or the pros and cons of "backgrounders," although these and other issues are implicit in the disclosures. "The worrying point," to borrow a phrase from Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times,* is the truly disturbing insight which the recent disclosures give into the way foreign policy is conducted, and particular decisions are made, by our government today. A year ago (January 18, 1971), Terence Smith detailed in a major *Times* article how power, function and influence have ebbed from the State Department to the Executive. The main body of professional diplomats at State and at various posts abroad were largely frozen out of high decision making in 1971. Thoughtful dispatches from Ambassador Keating in New Delhi were ignored. There seems to be little if any meaningful feedback of opinion from the United Nations to the White House since Ambassador Yost departed. Now Henry Kissinger has a finger in every foreign policy pie; his influence is ubiquitous. He is not Secretary of State nor is he responsible to any committee of the Congress, but the Anderson Papers disclose that he is, as one paper put it, "the shot caller." One man, even a man as able as Kissinger, served by an efficient but small staff can hardly know all that should be known about every situation in the world in which the United States has an interest.

There is evidence also that foreign policy decisions are being made on the basis of faulty and inadequate intelligence; for example, the Anderson Papers reveal the extent to which the CIA was unable to come up with reliable, current intelligence about developments in Bangla Desh. The President must make decisions of the utmost importance which are strongly influenced, if not entirely determined, by the kind of military advice he receives. Yet, as Morton H. Halperin has pointed out (*Foreign Affairs,* January 1972), the military has a virtual monopoly on providing information to the President about such matters as the readiness and capabilities of U.S. and allied forces. Here, too, there is excellent reason to believe that the President should have some alternative sources as a check on military evaluations, but civilian "crisis managers" have at best limited access to military information. Public understanding and support is a prime ingredient of a successful foreign policy, but how can the public have confidence in background briefings by Kissinger which later turn out to have been quite misleading? Congressional support, understanding and approval is another ingredient of a sound foreign policy; but such confidence is also largely absent at the moment. Last October, Sen. Ernest F. Hollings gave a vivid summation of the problem: "The conduct of the Executive branch in recent years has almost nothing in common with what representative government is supposed to be all about. The decisions are made in secret. No one is consulted. Then time is set aside on TV while the nation plays a guessing game called 'What's up the President's sleeve tonight?' Finally some [illegible] then the President moves on to something else. It is the theatre of the absurd. Meanwhile the people, their elected representatives in Congress, and even officers of the Cabinet have no idea of the reasons behind the President's frequent policy reversals. That . . . is the worst kind of courthouse politics. . . ." This then is the basic "worrying point" about the recent disclosures.